



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2023

English - Ordinary Level - Paper 1

Total Marks: 200

Wednesday, June 7 – Morning, 9.30 – 12.20

- This paper is divided into two sections.
Section I COMPREHENDING and Section II COMPOSING.
- The paper contains **three** texts on the general theme of **LIFE LESSONS**.
- Candidates should familiarise themselves with each of the texts before beginning their answers.
- Both sections of this paper (COMPREHENDING and COMPOSING) must be attempted.
- Each section carries 100 marks.

SECTION I – COMPREHENDING

- Two questions, A and B, follow each text.
- Candidates must answer a Question A on one text and a Question B on a different text. Candidates must answer only one Question A and only one Question B.
- **N.B.** Candidates may NOT answer a Question A and a Question B on the same text.

SECTION II – COMPOSING

- Candidates must write on **one** of the compositions 1 – 7.

Do not hand this up.

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TEXT 1 – LESSONS LEARNED ON THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

The following text is based on edited extracts from an article by Liam Mackey which originally appeared in the *Irish Examiner*. In it, Irish international soccer player, Denise O’Sullivan reflects on her life and career.

1. A passionate love of football, nurtured on the streets of Knocknaheeny, now sees Denise O’Sullivan with the world at her feet. In a recent pronouncement, Vera Pauw, the hugely experienced Ireland head coach, hailed O’Sullivan as “one of the best players in the world,” adding, “there is no other player in the world at this moment that is a playmaker but also has the drive to win the ball back. She has everything.”
2. Most fundamentally, of course, the 25-year-old has a deep love of the game which was nurtured on the streets around her childhood home in Knocknaheeny where, in a family of nine children, she first picked up the football bug from her older brothers, one of whom, John Paul, was capped at junior international level.
3. “I was definitely regarded as *the girl that plays football*,” she recalls. “The other girls in school... they didn’t mind at all. They knew I loved it and were very supportive. And it’s funny because I’d hardly ever hang out with them. I was always with the boys. Coming home from school, I’d have some food, get on my soccer boots and then my mam wouldn’t call me for hours. I’d be out there playing non-stop, just playing with the boys. Getting on the ball is my thing as a player and I think that started from a very young age. I always wanted to be on the ball in games and I’d scream until I had that ball.”
4. Denise reflects upon her first move away from home to Glasgow when she was

eighteen.

“It was a great challenge. I was homesick for a few months I would say. Honestly, I couldn’t even cook when I went there,” she laughs. “And I struggled a bit because my mam was amazing. She used to cook for me all the time when I was at home. That was a big thing going over there: cooking my own meals and washing my own clothes. How do you turn on the washing machine? (Laughs) But I learned pretty quickly. I had to become independent and I think I did.”

5. O’Sullivan is now the most globe-trotting of Irish players, dividing her club football between America and Australia. She says, “I just love travelling now, I love going places. I’m away from my family quite a lot. But, from being in America, I still get to see them quite a bit. Football has made me become more independent and mature.”

6. “I had to get used to new environments, meet new people. And I had to prove myself.” And there is still so much more for her to achieve in terms of honours for her country. Denise says, “I don’t think I’m done yet. I think there’s still a long way to go and I think I still have a lot of learning to do as a player. I’m not perfect on the pitch by any means, I make mistakes like anyone else. So having Vera as a coach is a huge thing to me. She’s a top coach. And having the team around me, they’ll keep pushing me on to be a top player.”

7. “I think at the moment, in our team, it’s the most players playing with top teams overseas we’ve ever had and I think that’s a huge benefit — people training with the best facilities and playing with some of the best



players. I think it's the fittest we've ever been too. I always want to get the best out of myself." As far as Denise is concerned, there is still plenty of room for improvement.



N.B. Answer ONLY ONE Question A and ONLY ONE Question B.

Question A – 50 Marks

Candidates may NOT answer Question A and Question B on the same text.

Question B – 50 Marks

Imagine you have completed your Leaving Certificate and have moved away from home. You decide to write a **blog** over the course of your first year away from home, recording what life is like for you. Write the blog detailing your experiences. In it you should write about: how you felt leaving home, some of the difficulties you experienced during the year and some of the things that you learned by the end of the year.

TEXT 2 – LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

The following text is based on edited extracts from a speech delivered by Booker Prize winning author George Saunders to a group of students graduating from Syracuse University.

1. Down through the ages, a traditional form has evolved for this type of speech, which is: Some old guy, his best years behind him, who over the course of his life has made a series of dreadful mistakes (that would be me), gives heartfelt advice to a group of shining, energetic young people with all of their best years ahead of them (that would be you). And I intend to respect that tradition.

2. Now, one useful thing you can ask old people like me is, “Looking back, what do you regret?” And they’ll tell you. Sometimes, as you know, they’ll tell you even if you haven’t asked. Sometimes, even when you’ve specifically requested that they not tell you, they’ll tell you. So: What do I regret? Being poor from time to time?

Not really. No. I don’t regret that.

3. Do I regret the occasional humiliation? Like once, playing hockey in front of a big crowd, including this girl I really liked, I somehow managed, while falling and emitting this weird whooping noise, to score on my own goalie, while also sending my stick flying into the crowd, nearly hitting that girl?

No. I don’t even regret that.

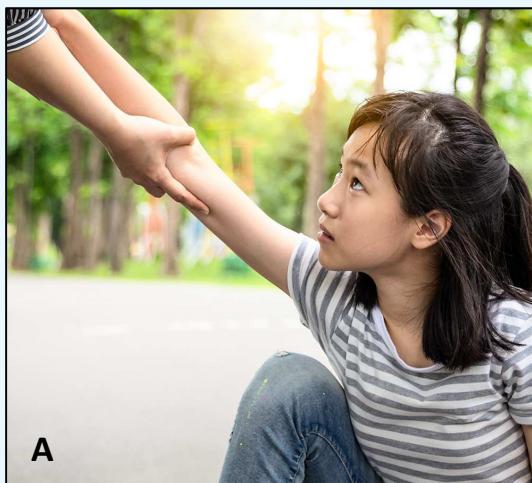
4. So here’s something I know to be true, although it’s a little corny, and I don’t quite know what to do with it: What I regret most in my life are failures of kindness. Those moments when another human being was there, in front of me, suffering and I responded... sensibly. Reservedly. Mildly.

5. Who in your life, do you remember most fondly with the most undeniable feelings of warmth? Those who were kindest to you, I bet. As a goal in life, you could do worse than: Try to be kinder. Do all the other things, of course, the ambitious things – travel, get rich, get famous, innovate, lead, fall in love, make and lose fortunes, swim naked in wild jungle rivers – but as you do, to the extent that you can, be kind.

6. When young, we’re anxious – understandably – to find out if we’ve got what it takes. Can we succeed? Can we build a viable life for ourselves? You do well in high-school, in hopes of getting into a good college, so you can do well in the good college, in the hopes of getting a good job, so you can do well in the good job so you can... And this is actually okay. If we’re going to become kinder, that process has to include taking ourselves seriously – as doers, as accomplishers, as dreamers. We have to do that, to be our best selves.

7. So, quick end-of-speech advice. Since, according to me, your life is going to be a gradual process of becoming kinder and more loving: Hurry up. Speed it along. Start right now. Find out what makes you kinder, what opens you up and brings out the most loving, generous, and unafraid version of you — and go after those things as if nothing else matters. Because, actually, nothing else does. Do those things that incline you toward the big questions, and avoid the things that would reduce you and make you trivial. Your soul, if you will – is as bright and shining as any that has ever been.

8. And someday, in eighty years, when you're a hundred and I'm a hundred and thirty-four, and we're both so kind and loving we're nearly unbearable, drop me a line, let me know how your life has been.



I hope you will say: It has been so wonderful. I wish you great happiness, all the luck in the world, and a beautiful summer.



N.B. Answer ONLY ONE Question A and ONLY ONE Question B.

Question A – 50 Marks

(i) Based on your reading of TEXT 2, what impression do you form of George Saunders? Make three points in your response. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)

(ii) What features of the above speech do you believe make it suitable or not suitable to be delivered to students at a graduation ceremony? Explain your answer. (15)

(iii) (a) What would you consider to be the most valuable lesson that you have learned in your life? Explain why you consider this lesson to be so valuable. (10)

(b) Imagine that one of the images accompanying this text was projected on a screen behind George Saunders as he delivered this speech. Which **one** of the two images would you choose in order to make a strong impression on the audience? Give reasons for your answer. (10)

Candidates may NOT answer Question A and Question B on the same text.

Question B – 50 Marks

Imagine you are conducting a **radio interview** with an older person who has had an eventful life. Write the text for the interview, including the responses that you think the interviewee might give. In the interview you should ask them: to describe an eventful episode that made them think, to reflect on something they would do differently and to offer one piece of advice they think would be beneficial for the listeners.

TEXT 3 – LIFE LESSONS THROUGH ART

This text is based on an article in *The Smithsonian* by Will Ellsworth Jones. In it he discusses the mysterious graffiti artist, Banksy, whose identity is kept secret and whose art often raises questions about life lessons and life's challenges. The text includes two images by Banksy.



1. When *Time* magazine selected the British artist Banksy — graffiti master, painter, activist, filmmaker and all-purpose *provocateur* — for its list of the world's 100 most influential people, he found himself in the company of Barack Obama, Steve Jobs and Lady Gaga. He supplied a picture of himself with a paper bag (recyclable, naturally) over his head. Most of his fans don't really want to know who he is (and have loudly protested against the media's attempts to unmask him).

2. *Pest Control*, the tongue-in-cheek-titled organisation set up by the artist to authenticate real Banksy artwork, also protects him from prying outsiders. Hiding behind a paper bag, or, more commonly, e-mail, Banksy relentlessly controls his own thought-provoking narrative.

3. Banksy's first London exhibition, so to speak, took place in Rivington Street in 2001, when he and fellow street artists convened in a tunnel near a pub. "We hung up some

decorators' signs nicked off a building site," he later wrote, "and painted the walls white, wearing overalls. We got the artwork up in 25 minutes and held an opening party later that week with beers and some hip-hop pumping out of the back of a Transit van. About 500 people turned up to an opening which had cost almost nothing to set up."

4. Banksy brought his own brand of prankster performance art to major museums, including the Louvre. There, he succeeded in installing an image of the Mona Lisa plastered with a smiley-face sticker. Back in mid-October 2003, an anonymous Banksy walked into the Tate museum in Britain, clutching a large paper bag, took out his own picture, and stuck it up. In New York City, he secretly attached a small portrait of a woman (which he had found and modified to depict the subject wearing a gas mask) to a wall in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

5. He is a man, one suspects, who enjoys what he is doing, but who used to have

trouble dealing with the fame, even anonymously. In the early days he had great trouble dealing with the money, although that has changed too. After a triumphant show in Los Angeles in 2006 (which he attended anonymously) he said, "The attention given to my work weirded me out so much, I refused to sell anything new for two years." Yet he still went to Los Angeles to do a big, big show, to which he and his minders invited the likes of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt. These were hardly the actions of a man who didn't want anyone to know he was in town.



N.B. Answer ONLY ONE Question A and ONLY ONE Question B.

Question A – 50 Marks

(i) Based on your reading of TEXT 3 what impression do you form of Banksy? Make three points in your response. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)

(ii) Graffiti can be both visually striking and thought-provoking. In the case of **both** of the images by Banksy, describe what is visually striking about each image and explain what life lessons you gained from them. (15)

(iii) (a) What would you consider to be the most valuable lesson that you have learned in your life? Explain why you consider this lesson to be so valuable. (10)

(b) Why do you think the artist Banksy has tried to remain anonymous? Give reasons for your answer. You may refer to the text if you wish. (10)

Candidates may NOT answer Question A and Question B on the same text.

Question B – 50 Marks

Graffiti has started to appear on walls and other surfaces in your local area. It has become a source of controversy, with some people considering it to be art and others considering it vandalism. Write a **letter** to your local newspaper in which you respond to the issue. In your letter you should: describe what some of the graffiti looks like, explain what your own views are on the controversy and make a suggestion as to what actions local authorities should take in relation to it.

SECTION II

COMPOSING

(100 marks)

Write a composition on **any one** of the following composition assignments in **bold print** below.

Each composition carries 100 marks.

The composition assignments are intended to reflect language study in the areas of information, argument, persuasion, narration, and the aesthetic use of language.

1. TEXT 1 details Denise O'Sullivan's passionate love of football.

Write a personal essay in which you describe some of the things in life that you are passionate about and explain why these things are so important to you.

2. In the speech in TEXT 2 the audience is encouraged to "try to be kinder".

Write a short story in which a person carries out an act of kindness which has a surprising or unexpected outcome.

3. In the opening of TEXT 2 George Saunders refers to people making "a series of dreadful mistakes" in life.

Imagine you are taking part in a schools' debating competition. Write a speech in which you argue for or against the motion: "Human beings never learn from their mistakes."

4. TEXT 3 refers to a list of the world's 100 most influential people.

Write a personal essay in which you describe some of the important people who have had an influence on you, and explain the impact they have had on your life.

5. The artist Banksy who features in TEXT 3 is sometimes referred to as a 'celebrity artist'.

Write a magazine article entitled, "Celebrities – Love Them or Hate Them!" in which you discuss the influence of celebrity culture in today's world. Your article may be serious or humorous or both.

6. In TEXT 2, George Saunders describes an embarrassing moment in his life.

You have been asked to give a talk to the first-year students starting in your school entitled, "You can't get it right all of the time in life!" Your talk aims to put the first-year students at ease as they start life in their new school.

7. In TEXT 1, being competitive is important to Denise O'Sullivan.

Write a short story in which two rival characters compete against each other, leading to disastrous consequences for them both.

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Acknowledgements

Images and texts that appear on this examination paper were sourced as follows:

Text 1: Mackey, Liam. "Denise O'Sullivan's journey from the streets of Knocknaheeny to being hailed as one of the world's best." *Irish Examiner*. Nov 2019.

Images: <https://www.independent.ie/sport/soccer/3d84e/36993822.ece/AUTOCROP/w620/osullivan.JPG>;
https://img.maximummedia.ie/sportsjoe_ie/

Text 2: Saunders, George. *Congratulations, by the Way*. Random House. April 2014.

Images: <https://pride.kindness.sg/netizens-share-the-heartwarming-acts-of-kindness-theyve-experienced-in-singapore/>; <https://pastors.com/three-mistakes-we-make-when-facing-the-future/>

Text 3: Ellsworth-Jones, Will. *"The Story Behind Banksy."* Smithsonian Magazine. Feb 2013.

Images: <https://media.s-bol.com/81E8AKzYxqzj/1200x800.jpg>;
https://i.etsystatic.com/6878539/r/il/59e23a/1600448453/il_794xN.1600448453_20fo.jpg

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Leaving Certificate – Ordinary Level

English

Wednesday 7 June

Morning 9.30 – 12.20